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AN ESSAY ON WOOL,

AND WOOLLEN MANUFACTURE,

FOR

The Improvement of Trade,

TO

The Benefit of Landlords, Feeders of Sheep, Clothiers, and Merchants.

In a Letter to a Member of Parliament.

IMPRIMATUR,

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Edmund Bohun.

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AN ESSAY ON WOOL, AND Woollen MANUFACTURE.

FOraſmuch as *Wool* and *Woollen Manufacture*, is of very great Concern to every *Landed Man*, and that your Honour is no leſs deſirous to joyn in ſuch Meaſures, as may conduce to the Benefit of the Nation in general, and that place for which you ſerve in particular, as of your own Eſtate, I hope with all humility, that you will entertain this Paper with the ſame Candour, wherewith you have always accepted my Labours for the Publick; and the rather, becauſe your Honour will eaſily believe, that I have no Private Intereſt to ſerve, in relation to this Subject.

It hath been obſerved by Men of the greateſt Experience, that the *Undervaluation* of *Engliſh* Commodities abroad, hath been the firſt and moſt conſiderable detriment we have ſuffered in our Forreign Dealings.

And altho' at firſt the Dutch and the Eaſterlings did all they could to raiſe the Price of *our Woollen Manufacture*, to the end, that they might the better ſell their *own*, yet having now eſtabliſhed their own to a great and dangerous degree, they begin to run down our Cloth, as faſt as before they hoiſted it up, and care not how cheap we ſell, provided they can aſſign for the Cauſe of that Cheapneſs, the falſe making of our Cloth of late, and the exacter care that *Forreign Manufactors* take, for the Accuſation now is not, that our Cloth is *dear*, but *falſe made*.

And it appears, not only by the Confeſſion, but by the Complaint of our *Clothiers* in general, that this ſuggeſtion of *Forreign Dealers* hath but too much ground; they complain very juſtly, That Dutch *Chapmen*, and *private Merchants*, who have of late Years exported our Cloth, having not been able to give the full Price, have had great Quantities of Cloth made to that Price that they can afford to give, and tho' the *honeſt Clothier* doth make ſuch bad Ware with great regret, yet he is forced to make ſuch as he can vend, ſince the Societies of Merchants, who always gave a good Price (for which they had ſuch Ware as Forreign Manufactors cannot imitate) do now buy very little, being under-ſold abroad by *petty Chap-men*, who, of late Years, have forced a Trade.

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This *ſudden* and *unnatural Trade* hath for divers times been experimented, to make the Price of *Wool* for a while riſe; for that low Price, at which *Foreign-Merchants* have ſet this falſe-made Cloth, hath cauſed many Buyers abroad, to take advantage of that cheap Opportunity of ſtocking themſelves with *Engliſh Drapery*; and ſuch a Trade hath laſted for Three or Four years, whereby much Wool hath been here manufactured, and the Price of Wool accordingly raiſed; but at length, when the Baſeneſs of this *Manufacture* hath been diſcovered, and the Markets abroad clogg'd, as ſudden a Fall of Wool muſt in all likelihood be expected to have enſued, and by this Opportunity the Value of *foreign made Cloth* hath been raiſed, our Cloth diſcredited, Merchants of Societies diſcourag'd, Clothiers had little to do, Growers to pay, and Landlords to receive. So that with Submiſſion it ſeems abſolutely neceſſary to the Good of this Kingdom,

I. That our *Woollen Manufacture* be raiſed to its former *Credit* and *Eſteem* abroad.

II. That the *Ballance of Trade* be ſet evener, and and that neither too much nor too little be every year exported.

III. That it may be put not only into a *flouriſhing*, but into a *laſting State*.

For, *Firſt*, If the Price of our Cloth be low *abroad*, 'tis impoſſible that Wool ſhould continue to bear a good Price at *home*: If Cloth falls, the Mate-

rial 'tis made of muſt fall with it, and conſequently the Labours of the *Card-makers*, *Breakers*, *Combers*, *Carders*, *Spinners*, *Weavers*, *Fullers*, *Shearmen*, *Clothiers*, *Dyers*, *Cloth workers*, *Packers*, &c. muſt be beat down, if theſe be diſcourag'd, we muſt more and more loſe our Manufacture, for who will breed up their Children to a *diſcourag'd Trade*? And in the end we ſhall as effectually loſe it as the Dutch have already gained it.

Secondly, If the *Ballance of Trade* be not kept even, not only in reference to Goods *exported* and *imported*, which the Foreigner never obſerves, but in reference likewiſe to Foreign Markets, that one be not over-clogg'd with that Commodity which another wants, and that Times and Seaſons be duly obſerv'd, we ſhall put the Chapmen abroad, that are to take off our Cloth to ſuch Uncertainties, that there will be no dealing with us, for they will find in many places, that *private Merchants* have ſupply'd thoſe *Retailers*, whom they uſed to furniſh, they'll find Cloath cheap where they expect it to be dear; ſo that they cannot ſell, and Cloth dear where they expect it to be cheap, ſo that they cannot buy; ſo when they buy, it ſhall be *Dutch* Cloth, and when they ſell ours, it ſhall be for *what they can get*.

Thirdly, 'Tis of no advantage to the Nation to have a Fit of good Trading, if it cannot *continue*; nay, in this Inſtance of *Woollen Manufacture* it is injurious; for if a *Purchaſer* buys *Land*, or a *Tenant* takes a *Leaſe*, or a *Grower* encreaſes his *Stock*, upon the conſideration of *Wools* bearing ſuch a Price, each one of theſe

theſe is a Loſer when it falls. And ſo if the *Clothier* encreaſes his Number of *Apprentices*, *Looms*, *Stock*, and the like, upon a falſe Suppoſition, he is like to be ruined. The Condition things are in at *preſent* is not only to be minded, but that which they muſt neceſſarily be in *hereafter*.

Wherefore 'tis humbly propos'd, in the firſt place,

I. That Care be taken, that our Cloth be made ſo good, that it ſhall bear a conſiderable *Price* abroad, and yet be *cheaper* to the *Buyer* than foreign-made Cloth; for if at the ſame time it be not cheaper in proportion to the Goodneſs than *Dutch-made Cloth*, 'tis impoſſible that we can keep the Trade from them. 'Tis natural for every Man to make the moſt of his Penny, and ſince our *Growers* and *Clothiers* cannot live upon their Profeſſion, at the price of Cloth which the Dutch do now afford it at, we muſt make our Cloth *truer* and *better* than they do to outſell them. For though the *Wool* be of our *own growth*, and *Fuller's-Earth peculiar* to us, yet they have ſo many ways of getting the former, and ſo much Store have they got from us of the latter, that they can continue the Manufacture many years without us. And if inferior *Workmen* with them are to be had ſo much cheaper than with us, the Advantages of our Native Commodities do but little more than compenſate for the dearneſs of our Workmen.

But ſomething they do, and ſomething we ſurpaſs them when we pleaſe in *Workmanſhip*, to which if a little *good Policy* and *State-Encouragement* were added, we may ſtill retrieve a *Languiſhing Trade*, by ſuffering no Cloth to go out of *England*, but of ſuch a *Standard Goodneſs*, according to ſuch and ſuch Marks.

II. Se-

II. Secondly, That our Cloth-Trade may be divided all over the World, into particular Cantons proportioned and ballanc'd, as may ſeem beſt upon due Information, to the Wiſdom of *Parliament*, who may perhaps think fit to conſtitute of their own Members an Annual Committee, with fixed Allowances and Penſions out of a publick Bank, who may alter and rectifie the Proportions of each Engliſh Corporation of Merchants, and place of foreign Sale, according as Times and Occaſions alter.

III. Thirdly, That ſuch a certain and definite number of *Cloths* be every year exported neceſſarily, without any abatement for any pretended Contingencies, as may keep the Price of *Wool*, and the *Manufacture* of it to ſuch a height, as that the *Clothier* ſhall know it his Intereſt to make ſo many more Cloths than now he doth; the *Grower* to encreaſe his Stock of Sheep, and the *Landlord* to raiſe his Rent and Value of Land.

Concerning the firſt of theſe three Propoſals, divers *Acts of Parliament* are ſtill in force, which may be revived and amended as may ſeem good to the Legiſlative Powers; the other two are liable, ſo far as I can ſee, to no Difficulties and Objections, but what may be obviated by this *Method*, *viz.*

There being ſo many Societies of Engliſh Merchants exporting our Woollen Manufacture to foreign parts, they may be obliged, coming under ſuch *Regulations* as the Parliament ſhall think fit, to *export every Year each Company ſuch a proportion of Cloth*

Cloth altogether may leave us but Hare enough for our own uſe, and that at a round price. Thus ſuppoſing the Cloth-trading Merchants to be the Merchant-Adventurers, the *Turky Company*, the *Eaſt-India Company*, the *Eaſtland Company*, the *Hudſon's-Bay Company*, the *Ruſſia Company*, the *African Company*.

And ſuppoſe there be, in all *England* and *Wales*, (according to the ingenious and accurate Mr *Houghton*) 39938500 Acres of Land, and one Third part of it unfit for feeding of Sheep, as Woods, Parks, Fens, Mine-pits, *&c.* or otherwiſe employ'd; and that one Sixth-part of the Remainder be good Meadow, and ſuch Land as will maintain two Sheep on an Acre; and that all the reſt be plow'd Land, barren Downs, Waſts, Commons, Orchards, and the like; which may, one with another, maintain one Sheep on an Acre, this will amount to 31063257 Sheep in the whole Nation: Allow then 75 Fleeces to a Pack of Wool, there will be 414176 Packs.

One Pack weighing 240 *l.* all Detriments, Waſt and Tare rebated, will make Three Pieces of Broad-Cloth, Thirty Yards to a Piece; and if we make yearly in all *England* 150000 Broad-Cloths, they are ſuppoſed to take up 50000 Packs of our Wool, and of the *Spaniſh* Wool imported, we may, at the moſt, reckon Ten thouſand Cloths more; in all 160000.

One Pack of Wool will make likewiſe ſix Pieces of leſſer Drapery, as Kerſeys, Bays, Flannel, Serges, Perpetuano's, Says, Friſe, and the like, one with another of thirty Yards a Piece; and, I reckon, that we make 1600000 of theſe leſſer Draperies, (I may call 'em altogether) yearly, which will ſpend 266666 Packs, their's 316666 Packs diſpoſed of; and ſuppoſe

ſuch

ſuch Uſes as ſhall be hereafter mention'd, to take up the remaining 97510 Packs, here's the whole Product of Wool in the Land, which by the former Computation of Acres, amounts to 99402240 Pound.

Grant then, that in *England* there be 7000000 of Men, Women, and Children, of which 1000000 to be Infants, and their Wear not reckon'd, Two Millions more to wear old and patch'd Cloaths, Lindſey-woolſie, and the like, and but One in Seven to wear Broad-Cloth, and no more each than three Yards a piece for a whole Year, this amounts to 100000 Cloths: And that Three more in the Seven wear only leſſer Drapery, and but 5 Yards each to a Year's Wear, (which in *Norwich*, and ſuch-like Stuffs, will not go far) this comes to 500000 Pieces; then to every Piece of Cloth, allow one Piece of Stuffs in Linings, Waſtcoats, Breeches, *&c.* and we have but 1000000 of leſſer Drapery, and Sixty thouſand Cloths yearly to Export.

Then for 97510 Packs of Wool remaining, allow to every one of the Six Millions, One pair of Stockins a Year, and Four pair to a pound of Wool, and a quarter as many exported, amount to 25000 Packs; then for Hats, that of Three Millions, each wears one Hat in two Years, and four Hats to one Pound of Wool, amounts to Five thouſand Packs more.

Upholſterers Ware, as Blankets, Curtains, Hangings, Skreens, Linings of Coaches, Chairs, and the like, to be a quarter-part of the Stuffs that are made, ſpends Fifty thouſand Packs; and if one thirtieth part of our Wool be put to ſuch Uſes as are here omitted, and

and otherwiſe waſted in dreſſing and working it, what's left will be too little for burying Shrouds, and other Funeral Occaſions.

And now we have none left but what is to be Exported, *viz.* Sixty thouſand Cloths, and One Million of leſſer Drapery.

Firſt then, The Merchant-Adventurers being reſtored by Queen *Elizabeth*, upon the Petitions of the *Growers* and *Clothiers*, to all thoſe Priviledges, which in the Twenty-ninth Year of Her Reign they had been deprived of, flouriſhed ſo, that about the Year 1600, they Exported Sixty thouſand White Cloths, beſides all manner of Stuffs every Year, the White Cloths alone valued at 600000 *l.* Forty Years after they Exported about 50000 Broad Cloths, 1000 Bays, and 20000 Stuffs a Year: And the Reaſon they give, why of late they have not Exported a quarter ſo many Broad-Cloths, and little more than half ſo many Stuffs, is, that *Forreigners* who underſtand not the Trade, have brought Quantities of *falſe-made Cloth* here, and Exported it, and not only *glutted* and *miſtimed* Forreign *Markets*, but brought the Commodity into *diſeſteem*. Now if the Wiſdom of the Parliament ſhall think fit to put a ſtop to that *private Trade*, and reſtore the Merchants to their former State, they cannot think themſelves ill uſed, if it be upon Condition, That they every Year Export Fifteen thouſand Broad-Cloths; and ſeeing the Stuff-Trade, and eſpecially of new Draperies, is quicker of the two, 250000 of them.

The *Turkey*-Company may likewiſe be obliged to Export yearly Twenty eight thouſand Broad-Cloaths, and Five thouſand Stuffs. The *East-India* Company Five thouſand Broad-Cloths, and 45 thouſand Stuffs. The *East-land* Company Three thouſand Cloths, and Ten thouſand Stuffs. The *Hudſon-Bay* Company Five hundred Cloths. The *Ruſſia* Company Four thouſand Cloths, and Four thouſand Stuffs. The *African* Company One hundred and forty thouſand Stuffs.

So that now we have but Four thouſand five hundred Broad-Cloths, and Five hundred forty ſix thouſand Stuffs remaining.

And the *Portuguezes*, who would take off at leaſt Three hundred thouſand Pound a Year in our Woollen Manufactures, if we would deal with 'em for Wine, do nevertheleſs take off about 180 thouſand Stuffs a Year. *Spain*, about Two thouſand Cloths, and Three hundred thouſand Stuffs. *Italy*, Five hundred Cloths, and Forty thouſand Stuffs. *Barbary* Six thouſand Stuffs. The *Weſtern* Plantations, Ten thouſand Stuffs. *Sweden*, and *Norway*, Two thouſand Cloths, and Ten thouſand Stuffs; without any Obligation, but the Neceſſity of their Trade. Theſe Proportions I inſiſt not upon, the Wiſdom of Parliament will find out better.

But if the *Merchant-Adventurers*, or any other *Fraternity*, ſhall, after the Proportion is ſet out, think themſelves hardly dealt with, by being obliged ſo to increaſe their Dealings, they have a Remedy at hand, and can eaſe themſelves, by *enlarging* their Company, and making more Members of it Free upon *eaſie Terms*. In King *James* the Firſt's time, they had Three thouſand

ſand five hundred Freemen of that Company; and ſince that, they have had Six thouſand Free at a time: Now ſuppoſe they admit but Four thouſand Freemen, and that but one quarter of theſe are Dealers, and that one with another, they Export each for himſelf, but Fifteen Cloths, and Two hundred and fifty Stuffs a Year, which is no great Merchandizing, it will do; and accordingly the other Companies, if they think fit, may take the like Meaſures.

I proceed therefore to the Advantages that we may expect to reap by ſuch a Method.

I. Firſt, This will keep the *Cloth-Trade* altogether in the hands of the **Engliſh**; I mean, the Profits of Trade in *Engliſh Manufacture*, in which **Forreigners** at preſent have too great a ſhare, as *Engliſh Merchants* and *Clothiers* well know to their *ſorrow*.

II. There will be leſs Danger and Loſs upon the Seas. Societies of Merchants trading in *ſtrong* and *well-mann'd Veſſels*, and not adventuring, as petty Merchants do, without Convoys, to the enriching the Enemy, and impoveriſhing our ſelves.

III. This will encourage the Building of great and able Ships, which may be of Service to the Publick in Times of Neceſſity: for Societies will not hazard ſo valuable a Commodity as *Cloth*, and in ſuch great Parcels, as doubtleſs they will ſend out at a time, in ordinary Veſſels: for one of the *Myſteries* of *Merchandize*, being the right *timeing* of *Markets*, they will not ſend over in Driblets, as independent Traders do,

but ſend ſufficient Quantities at a time, according to the *Occaſions* and *Faſhions* of the Places they deal with; beſides, their By-Laws oblige 'em to Export only in *Engliſh Bottoms.*

IV. The Nation's Credit abroad will by this means improve, and thoſe Societies yearly bring to ſuch and ſuch Places, ſo great a quantity of our Manufacture, as will be a *Security* to any *Town* or *State* we deal with, and each Society will be more able upon any great Exigence, as by taking up Money, or engaging Themſelves, and their Effects, for the Service of their Country, to do the Nation, eſpecially in time of War, ſome ſignal Offices; as the *Merchant-Adventurers* did, about the time of the *Spaniſh Invaſion.*

V. Exportation of Manufactured Wool will be never attempted: for when the Manufacture is ſo much encourag'd, Wool will bear a better Price at home, than now it doth abroad; here will be Ready Money without danger, and variety of Markets; whereas the Exportors run great *Riſques*, are forced to ſell where they firſt Land, and ſometimes, to take *Words* inſtead of *Money.* For,

VI. The Price of Wool muſt neceſſarily *riſe* and *keep up*, if every Year ſo much is Exported, as not to leave *enough* for our home uſe.

VII. Our Cloth will bear a *conſtant good Price* abroad, when no body can much underſel another, becauſe all Wares of ſuch and ſuch Marks, will be of like goodneſs, the Price at the firſt Penny will not be much

much different, the Charges and Hazards almoſt equal to every one, and no Merchant will be over or underſtock'd, to the unſpeakable undervaluation of our Ware.

VIII. 'Twill prevent our Clothiers, and other Manufactors, tranſporting themſelves into *Holland*, to the irreparable damage of this Nation, as 140 Families did out of *Norfolk* and *Suffolk*, in the Years 1635, 1636. and when Two or Three thouſand of our Engliſh Clothiers ſettled themſelves in the *Palatinate*.

IX. The Orders for Overſeeing and Sealing Cloth will be more ſtrictly look'd after, by publick Officers; and indeed every Member of theſe Societies: Whereas the Foreigner looks no farther, than to get ſo many Yards overplus, in conſideration of the want of Breadth and Goodneſs, provided he hath it at his own Terms, beating down by that means the Price of Cloth here, and underſelling it abroad: So that the Retailers abroad, that buy it of us, do only look upon the *Muſter* and *Outſide*, and finding themſelves afterwards cheated, they change their Chapmen, and deal with the *Honeſter Dutch*; which might be prevented by *Publick Officers*, and a *Publick Seal*.

X. This will make the Commodity more ſtaple, and more conſiderable all over the World; whereas now the proffer'd Sale of it makes it contemptible, and they that accept the Bargain make good the Merchant's Proverb, That *there is Twenty*

per

per Cent. *difference between, Will you Buy, and Will you Sell.*

XI. Greater quantities of Cloth will be here made than now is, when the Clothiers are morally ſure of a certain Market, and Ready-Mony before the Year goes about, and that make as much as they will, it ſhall be all taken off their Hands.

Theſe Benefits I have enumerated regard the Good of the *Nation in general*, and thoſe belonging to the *Merchant* and *Clothier* in *particular*, are likewiſe worth conſideration. For,

1. Wealthy Merchants will not be able to *Engroß* ſo much the Trade to themſelves as now they do, but every Member will have a *Share* in the *Circulation proportionable* to his *Abilities*. The Great Ones ſhall not have too much upon their Hands at a time, nor the leſſer Merchants too little, but every one ſhall have ſo many Lots as his Trade requires, which may be known and atteſted by Certificates from an *Engliſh Publick Notary* abroad, which will make every ones Factor induſtrious to drive as good and as ſpeedy a Trade as he can. Nor will this be any Wrong to great Merchants, or expoſing their Effects or Abilities, ſince every one hath Liberty to be of more than one Society, as we ſee divers Merchants belong at the ſame time both to the *Eaſt-India* and *African Company*, and ſo others.

2. Again,

2. Again, *Young Traders* would hereby have *Assistance* and *Direction* in their Dealings, and not be suffer'd to *Ruine* themselves, as they do, by wading out of their Depths. They would not find a way easily of *Trading without a Stock*, whereby they often ruine themselves and dishonour the Nation, it being a Reflection upon us abroad, that our *Young* Merchants engage themselves too deep, and when not *governed* by a *Society* too *extravagantly*.

Young Merchants, and those that cry out so much for *free Exportation*, do often take up Goods upon Credit or Exchange to Ten or Twelve *per Cent.* Loss, and afterwards upon some sudden Pinch being forced to Sell, they undersell others to keep up their Credit, to the disparagement of our Commodities and ruine of themselves, as well by losing in the Cloth they sell, as buying Forreign Ware at too dear a rate, enhaunsing the Price of our Neighbor's Commodities, and lessening that of our own, to make quick Return. So the Merchants of *York*, *Hull*, and *Newcastle* send young men over with their Cloth (too young indeed to deal with *Hollanders*, *Hans-towns*, and *Jews*) who having engaged themselves to relade their Ships at a certain day with Foreign Ware, before they can sell their Cloth they buy of Foreigners upon Credit, and having a Day of Payment set, are forced, be the Market how it will, to sell their Cloth at any rate, to keep up their Credit; which wild way of Traffick makes the Price of Cloth so uncertain to Foreigners, that the *Retailer* knows not when and how to buy, and so *grows weary of the Trade*.

3. This

3. This will be a Means to hinder the raiſing of *Tolls* and *Imports* abroad, each Company having Influence and Authority where they reſide, eſpecially in ſuch a Town as *Hamburgh*, where the Trade hath maintain'd 20000 Perſons at a time; and be able likewiſe to contravene all fraudulent Dealings and Combinations againſt the Trade.

4. This will not only keep up, but encreaſe the number of *Publick Places of Sale abroad*, where our Cloth is expoſed in an open Market, and all the Sellers are obliged to attend with great *Plenty* and *Variety*; which Method is known by long Experience to forward the Sale of any Ware: And ſuch publick Places and Markets can no more be ſettled abroad by *Private Dealers*, than it could be practis'd here at home by Foreigners, who though they had upon miſ-information of Queen *Elizabeth's* Council, the *George* in *King-ſtreet*, *Weſtminſter*, aſſigned them for a publick place of Trade, yet could never bring one Waggon-load of Clothes to be unloaded there: And if under the notion of *Buyers*, People in a foreign Country cannot without being *incorporated* make a *Publick Place* of Trade, much leſs can they under the Notion of *Sellers*.

Beſide that, publick Places of Sale are more for the *Honour* of the Commodity, and of the *Merchant*, than private bartering and pedling up and down, as thoſe ſtragling Merchants did in the year 1565, who went up and down at *Narve* in *Liſland*, with

with *Engliſh Cloth* under their Arms, and a Meaſure in their Hands, bringing the nobleſt Commodity of *England* into the greateſt Contempt.

But moſt Advantage of all will by this means accrue to the *Clothier*, and by conſequence to the *Grower*; for there will be ſo current a Price, and ſuch certain Dealings for this Staple Commodity, that *Brokers*, *Wool-Jobbers*, and the like, will not henceforth eat out the Clothiers *Profit*, (a great cauſe of the dearneſs of Manufacture in *England*) but the *Merchant* and *Draper* will be forced to employ Factors to go about the Country, and buy Cloth at the Clothiers home, paying ready Money: At leaſt the Clothiers bringing their Cloths to Market every week, will find Cuſtomers enough: So the pooreſt Clothiers, which have but a little Stock, may Trade for themſelves, which now they cannot do.

I could enumerate many more Conveniencies both *National* and *Particular*;

As, That it would be a means to prevent the King's being defrauded in his *Cuſtoms*.

That *Taxes* upon Stock and Effects may hereby be more *eaſily laid*.

That Trade will be judiciouſly varied according to *Emergencies* and *Alterations* abroad.

There will be leſs quarreling with our Merchants about *Tare* and *Rebatements*.

This will raiſe the Price of Corn throughout the Nation; for Wool keeping hereby certainly to a round price, Stock will be encreaſed, and a great deal of Land laid down in Paſture, ſo that there will be leſs Corn-Land, and leſs Corn ſowed.

But what I have ſaid may perhaps ſuffice to ſatisfie your Honour, That however I ſucceed, I think it my Duty to ſtudy the good of my Country.

I will not now trouble your Honour with an Account of the great Damages this Nation ſuſtains by the Exportation of that which is not full Manufactured, I leave that to another Hand.

I am, &c.